

UK statement on the WTO Joint Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation

Thank you Frances, good morning to you and colleagues, and thank you for convening today's meeting.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Jaime and colleagues for the progress that has already been made in this Initiative. We have got very close to agreement.

COVID-19 has been a challenge for the WTO, as it has been for other multilateral institutions. But COVID-19 makes it even more urgent to make progress on this initiative, and its goal of liberalising global Services trade. Success here will show the relevance of the WTO, and how it can help the world overcome the economic crisis we are now going through. It will also reinforce an open, and predictable global trading system, something that come under further threat during this COVID-19 crisis.

In response to your questions:

The UK priority is that the Initiative should deliver a timely and meaningful outcome, with as much ambition as possible. We are therefore keen to consolidate progress on outstanding issues by the end of this year, and reach a finalised text well before a rescheduled MC12. What a positive message it would send if we could announce an agreement at the special General Council later this year.

To that end, we support finding ways of keeping up the momentum, and getting back to open and fully inclusive negotiations as soon as possible. We look forward to the meeting on the 16th. In addition, now that the Swiss authorities are permitting physical meetings, of up to 300 people, from tomorrow, we think it should be possible for the WTO to support resuming physical meetings soon in line with Swiss health guidance. We think the Initiative should seek to take advantage of these developments, if colleagues here are ready and agree to this step, and hold hybrid physical meetings before the summer.

The United Kingdom will continue to do all it can do ensure that this Initiative reaches a successful conclusion.

Thank you Frances.

Bird survey shows thriving ecosystem at Coal Authority sites

The survey, carried out in collaboration with the University of Hull and run by final-year geography student Rosie Jaques, showed our two sites support a total of 31 different bird species.

Our Woolley and Strafford [mine water treatment schemes](#), in Barnsley, were chosen due to their diverse landscapes, which include reed beds that act like large filters in the final stage of our treatment process to remove iron from mine water before it is discharged into rivers.

Some of the species we found have populations that are declining or have been found in fewer areas nationally over recent years and appear on the red and amber lists of Birds of Conservation Concern.

The birds use all the different habitats that are present, such as the lagoons, and while it is smaller, the Strafford site has a significantly higher bird density.

This could be due to having more habitats in a smaller space, which are not only better-connected, but also form a mosaic rather than discrete blocks.

Rosie recorded 4 red-listed species of birds, including grey wagtails, linnets, house sparrows and yellow hammers.

In addition, there were 8 amber-listed species, including black headed gulls, house martins, kestrels, kingfishers, mallards, reed buntings, swifts and willow warblers.

A grey heron at a Coal Authority mine water treatment scheme, taken by Rosie Jaques of Hull University.

Abby Moorhouse, Senior Geochemist with the Coal Authority, said:

It is so gratifying to see that our reed beds, which do an excellent job removing iron from mine waters, provide further benefits for the environment by creating habitats for other wildlife.

We value the work carried out by the university, which has increased our understanding of the biodiversity at our sites.

This will enable us to identify various actions to aid the

management of specific habitats and help improve our sites for the benefit of all, while ensuring these systems continue to fulfil their key function to treat mine waters.

While the survey sheds light on how our sites are currently used by wildlife, it also serves as a road map for the future.

The results suggest that having a greater variety of habitats within a site such as open water, marginal plants and reed beds, will encourage a greater diversity of observed species.

Dr Will Mayes, Reader in Environmental Science at the University of Hull, said:

We've known about the water quality benefits of the Coal Authority treatment systems for a number of years now, and it's revealing to see the additional benefits these systems can provide to wildlife.

Rosie did a great job undertaking the surveys, and it's very rewarding to see the work of our students feeding into real-world efforts for biodiversity improvements.

Richard Carline, the Coal Authority's Ecological and Environmental Manager, said:

We are working on a review of our sites to see how we can manage them differently to encourage biodiversity. This will be measured using the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' new biodiversity metric.

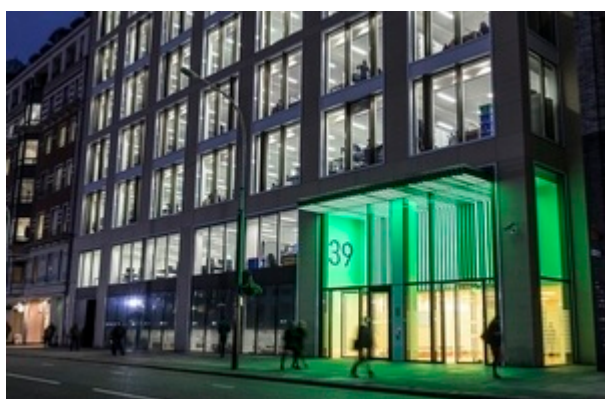
Both the study and our biodiversity improvement work contribute towards our duty as a public body to support thriving ecosystems whilst minimising habitat disruption. This will enable us to make a positive contribution to national strategies to secure and enhance the UK's biodiversity.

A grey wagtail at a Coal Authority mine water treatment scheme, taken by Rosie Jaques of Hull University.

Senior civil servant and former lecturer in medical statistics appointed to Joint Biosecurity Centre

Press release

Dr Clare Gardiner has been seconded to the role of Director General of the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) at DHSC to take it through to full operating capability.



The JBC brings together the UK's leading data analysis and epidemiological expertise with the aim of ensuring that outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19) are detected and brought under control quickly.

By combining multiple and new data feeds, the JBC is responsible for providing a single authoritative information picture to local, regional and national decision makers to help them respond rapidly to any outbreak. It's building on the UK's existing public health infrastructure and surveillance network, drawing on expertise from across government, industry and academia.

The JBC is also responsible for advising on the new COVID-19 Alert Level, collecting, collating and analysing data in order to provide a recommendation to the chief medical officers across the UK of the current level.

Currently Director of National Resilience and Strategy at the National Cyber Security Centre, Dr Gardiner has extensive experience in government as well as an academic and research background in medical statistics and epidemiology.

She is well placed to build on the initial operating capability of the JBC already delivered thanks to the temporary head of the unit, Tom Hurd. The JBC is expected to reach full operating capacity later this summer.

The JBC is part of the NHS Test and Trace service which is led by Executive

Chair Baroness Dido Harding in DHSC.

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Dounreay gives £100,000 to help businesses recover from Covid-19

The company responsible for decommissioning the fast reactor complex on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) is making available £100,000 to help local businesses get back on their feet after lockdown.

The money is being given to the Caithness Business Fund, which is managed by Caithness Chamber of Commerce. It is intended to help companies and traders with the cost of adapting their business models in the new era of physical distancing.

Trudy Morris, Chief Executive of Caithness Chamber of Commerce, said:

The money would be made available through a fast-track application process to the Caithness Business Fund over the course of several funding rounds, [the first of which is open now to applications](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on businesses in Caithness, and while the support from both UK and Scottish Governments has been welcome, it is clear that many businesses are now facing additional challenges as lockdown restrictions ease and we move towards the reset and recovery of our economy.

We know that the local business community is keen to reopen as soon as possible, but only in a way which is compatible with ensuring the safety of their workforce and their customers. Many businesses are facing significant costs as they look to adapt their premises to meet public health and social distancing requirements.

This generous support from DSRL will enable the fund to quickly support these businesses as they look to rebuild and recover in the coming months.

During the period of lockdown, DSRL assisted several essential businesses by making available the services of joiners to manufacture and install protective screens for staff.

As society moves into phase 1 of the lockdown easing, more businesses are expected to re-open and the need for safety modifications to protect staff

and public is expected to increase.

Mark Rouse, Managing Director of DSRL, said:

We were in a unique position to help essential businesses during the lockdown because we maintained a state of operational readiness that could be deployed to support the community.

As we move into phase 1, and our own focus moves onto how we can safely restart the work of decommissioning the site, we wanted to continue being able to help other businesses as they come out of hibernation.

A resilient local economy is really important to us – both today, because it helps us retain and recruit the specialist skills and services we need, and in the future, because we want the site to leave behind a legacy of social and economic wellbeing when the decommissioning is complete.

Dounreay, which was once the UK's centre for fast reactor research, is now Scotland's largest decommissioning project. The work is being delivered by DSRL, a company owned by Cavendish Dounreay Partnership, on behalf of the NDA.

[World Environment Day: £10.9m for international conservation](#)

The Government has awarded £10.9 million for global projects to protect rare wildlife and vulnerable habitats to mark this year's World Environment Day (5 June).

Wildlife set to benefit include turtles in the British Virgin Islands, penguins in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, coral reefs in Comoros and endangered chimpanzees in Uganda.

Over the next three years, 17 projects will receive £5.7 million through the [Darwin Initiative](#) – a world-renowned scheme that protects wildlife and the natural environment across the world. In addition, £5.2 million will be given to 21 projects through the [Darwin Plus](#) scheme for conservation of the unique and globally significant plants and animals that reside in UK Overseas Territories.

Wildlife to benefit from this funding include:

- The British Virgin Islands' turtle populations and their reefs and

seagrass meadow habitats through increasing local understanding of turtle conservation and fisher needs

- Endangered chimpanzees in Uganda through supporting local communities and providing training for reforestation efforts
- Coral reefs in the Comoros by helping small-scale fishers to effectively manage these habitats
- A number of species, such as Antarctic fur seals, albatross and penguin species including macaroni, king and Gentoo, in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands will be surveyed through drones to establish their baseline populations to help monitor and manage their long-term recovery

International Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

World Environment Day provides us all with a stark reminder of the need to take urgent action to reverse global biodiversity loss.

Through our Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus programme, we are restoring many precious natural environments across the world, helping to transform the lives of the poorest communities and prevent the extinction of some of the world's most wonderful species.

Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has funded 1,200 projects from 159 countries, with a value of over £177 million. Funding applications are recommended to ministers by The Darwin Expert Committee, which consists of experts from NGOs, government, academia, science and the private sector.

Professor E.J. Milner Gulland, Oxford University and Chair of the Darwin Expert Committee and Darwin Plus Advisory Group, said:

On World Environment Day, it's great that Darwin is able to support so many innovative, impactful projects around the world.

It was inspiring to delve into these projects during the assessment process, and I'm looking forward to seeing these projects blossom over the next few years, improving both the state of nature and people's lives.

At the [Spring Budget](#), the Chancellor announced the government would triple funding for the Darwin Plus programme to £10 million to help protect natural environments in UK Overseas Territories. This builds on the £220 million for biodiversity conservation in developing nations, and the doubling of UK international climate finance, [announced by the Prime Minister at the UN General Assembly last year](#).

A full list of projects, including a number of small schemes, to be supported by the Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus programme is available on the [Darwin Initiative website](#).